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CoCoFe

Communication Competency for Female Refugees on the Shop Floor
Improving communication skills in the workplace

IO1/A4 COCOFE TRANSNATIONAL REPORT

IO1: Analysis of language use in small scale industries and retail shop floors employing female refugees and forced migrants.

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Contents

Introduction	5
Aims/Objectives of the Report	5
Scope of Research	6
Methodology.....	6
Contribution to Existing Literature	6
Female Refugees and Female Forced Migrants in Cyprus, the United Kingdom, Finland, France, and Spain.....	7
Demographics	7
National Context	9
Language Used in Retail Shop Floors and Small Industries	11
United Kingdom	11
Cyprus	12
Spain.....	12
France.....	13
Finland.....	14
Conclusions	14
Language Needs of Female Refugees and Migrants working in Retail Shops and Small Industries.....	15
United Kingdom	15
Cyprus	16
Spain.....	16
France.....	17
Finland.....	17
Conclusions	18
Conclusion.....	18
Key Results	18
Recommendations	19
Taxonomy of Terminology	19
United Kingdom	20
Cyprus	22
France.....	23
Spain.....	23
Finland.....	24

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Bibliography 25

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Introduction

The present report represents the Transnational Report for IO1 (Analysis of language use in small scale industries and retail shop floors employing female refugees and forced migrants) of the project CoCoFe: Communicative Competency for Female Refugees on the Shop Floor: Improving communication skills in the workforce.

The five partners of the project CoCoFe conducted desk-based research and field research in order to determine the language used and language needs (language analysis) of female refugees and forced migrants working in small scale industries and retail shop floors in Cyprus, the United Kingdom, Spain, Finland, and France. Moreover, each partner drafted a taxonomy of terminology (**see Annex 1**) with words and phrases which are particularly problematic of the target group.

This report aims to summarise the conclusions made by the partners in their report and to lay the ground for the development of IO2: CoCoFe E-learning Platform.

Aims/Objectives of the Report

The aim of this report is to offer information on the language used in small scale industries and retail shop floors where female refugees and female forced migrants work in the partner countries (Cyprus, Finland, the United Kingdom, France, and Spain). Also, this report will indicate the language/linguistic needs of female refugees and female forced migrants in the partner countries and collate the taxonomies of terminology of informal language used in those environments. In so doing, the report has the following objectives:

- To identify the instances of female refugees and forced migrants employed in the target work environments in the partner countries;
- To examine the language used in small scale industries and retail shop floors where female refugees and female forced migrants are employed in partner countries;
- To identify the language needs of female refugees and female forced migrants working in small scale industries and retail shop floors in the partner countries;
- To produce a collated taxonomy of terminology of informal language used in those environments in the partner countries;
- To address existing gaps and contribute to existing literature.

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Scope of Research

The scope of the report is defined by the overall aims and purpose of the CoCoFe project. Namely, the report examines language needs of female refugees and female forced migrants working in small scale industries and retail shop floors in the five partner countries (Cyprus, Finland, United Kingdom, France, and Spain). As such, the focus of the report is primarily directed at assessing, addressing, and responding to the gaps, needs, and challenges that exist in relation to this issue.

Methodology

The method used in this report blends desk-based research and field-based research. The desk-based research makes use of quantitative material (i.e., statistical data), current practices, as well as qualitative analyses (literature review, policy, and practices review) dealing with the topic of female refugees and female forced migrants employed in the five partner countries. The field-based research comprises interviews with representatives from three stakeholders in each partner country, whose work and expertise are pertinent to the issue at hand. It is worth noting that even though the desk- and field-based work are methodologically different, they were not conducted as two entirely separate stages of research. Rather, they were understood to be *mutually reinforcing* processes. For instance, desk-based research provided important leads for finding retail shops or small industries and individuals who could be interviewed. Similarly, the interviews done as part of the field-based research offered crucial insights regarding “problematic words/phrases” and “language needs”; these insights often might not be visible from a desk-based perspective.

Contribution to Existing Literature

This report contributes to the existing literature in the following three ways:

- It informs and updates existing research on the topic by performing its analysis of recent and relevant data and resources through the creation of a taxonomy and dictionary of informal language used in retail shop floors and small scale industries.
- Its methodological blending of desk- and field-based research enriches studies that are grounded on only one of the two types of method.
- Finally, in their selection of interviewees, the authors of this report contacted stakeholders who have dissimilar administrative relations to (and, therefore, experience of) female refugees’ and female forced migrants’ language needs. Even though there were commonalities between the interviewees’ views on the key needs and challenges

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in creating awareness about workers' rights in migrant communities, there were also crucial differences. Taking multiple perspectives into consideration was important because it demonstrated that existing gaps and needs are not a fixed category – instead, what these gaps and needs are can also depend on each stakeholders' relation to the topic under examination.

Female Refugees and Female Forced Migrants in Cyprus, the United Kingdom, Finland, France, and Spain

This chapter aims to provide a general overview of the current situation of female refugees and female forced migrants in the partner countries. More specifically, this chapter will provide statistical information on female refugees and female forced migrants in the partner countries, their opportunities for employment, and information on the available opportunities to learn or be taught the partner country's language.

Demographics

To begin with, in the United Kingdom, it is reported that in 2020 the UK offered asylum and humanitarian protection to around 20,339 people. The end of March 2020 also granted 12,863 grants of asylum which saw an increase of 40% in comparison to the previous year (gov.uk, 2021). In the same year, it was also reported that 16% of all employed people within the UK were foreign-born. The Migration Observatory saw that there were fewer foreign-born women in work than UK born women (67% foreign-born and 73% UK born). Similarly, in 2020 the retail sector saw 18% of all workers foreign-born and the manufacturing sector saw 19% of all workers foreign-born (Migration Observatory, 2020).

In Cyprus, according to statistical data, at the beginning of 2018 approximately 71,797 Third Country Nationals (TCNs) were legally residing in Cyprus. 88% of them had valid temporary resident permits and 12% had long-term residency. Employment (45%), family reunification (13%), and international protection (11%) are the most represented purpose of stay, as revealed by data published on [31 July 2016](#) by the Civil Registry and Migration Department¹. Moreover, according to the latest [population census of 2011](#)², the 3 most represented countries of origin of the third country nationals residing in Cyprus are the Philippines, Russia, and Sri-Lanka.

In a likewise manner, in Spain it was observed that 50.8% of the immigrant population are women (National Statistical Institute data, January 2021). Of those female migrants, it is reported that there

¹[http://www.moi.gov.cy/moi/CRMD/crmd.nsf/All/5AB4DABEBE439315C2257FA8003AAFF7/\\$file/7.%20MONT%20STATS_JULY%202016.pdf](http://www.moi.gov.cy/moi/CRMD/crmd.nsf/All/5AB4DABEBE439315C2257FA8003AAFF7/$file/7.%20MONT%20STATS_JULY%202016.pdf)

²[https://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/3D52D8F17C418CFAC2257EEA00346671/\\$file/POPULATION_CENSUS-2011_VolIII-EL-261015.pdf?OpenElement](https://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/3D52D8F17C418CFAC2257EEA00346671/$file/POPULATION_CENSUS-2011_VolIII-EL-261015.pdf?OpenElement)

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is a high concentration in certain jobs, mainly those that have to do with domestic work and care. Also, the Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado [Spanish Commission for Refugee Aid] (CEAR) reports that Spain is the third country in the EU with the largest number of asylum seekers in the last year, with Venezuela and Colombia being the main countries of origin. However, the report mentions that “just 5% of the almost 115,000 people whose file was resolved achieved international protection (far from 33% of the community average), while 45% obtained a residence authorization because of humanitarian reasons and 60% were left helplessness [sic]”.

In France, the reported top five nationalities are Afghanistan (8,888 adult first-time applicants), Bangladesh (4,345), Pakistan (4,345), Guinea (2,781), and the Ivory Coast (2,742)³. The highest proportion of women is among nationalities from the African and American continents, particularly Dominican women with 68.5 percent, Ivorian women with 55.6%, and Angolans with 56.2%. On the contrary, the proportion of women is particularly low for nationalities from the Asian continent: Pakistani women with 5.4% and Bangladeshi and Afghan nationals with 8%⁴. In relation to working migrant and refugee women in France, their activity rate remains lower than that of immigrant men and non-immigrant women. 23% of immigrant women are blue-collar workers, compared to 10% of non-immigrant women. But they are half as likely as immigrant men to work in industry (slightly more than 10% compared to 20%). They are especially present in direct service to individuals (maternal assistants, housekeepers for the elderly, cleaning ladies, janitors): 26% of them work in this sector, compared to 11% of all non-immigrant women. They are also numerous in services offering unskilled jobs such as restaurants, hotels, supermarkets, cleaning, and business services⁵.

Lastly, according to the data from the Finnish Immigration Services in the year 2015, Finland received a large number of asylum-seeking applications with approximately 32,476 applications. In terms of the country of origin, almost two thirds of the applications were filed by Iraqis (20, 485 applications), Afghanistans (5,214 applications), Somalians (1, 981 applications), Syrians (877), Albanians (762 applications), and Iranians (619 applications). Furthermore, it is reported that the relative employment rates of migrant and refugee women were lower of those of men (Table 2. Sarvimäki, 2017).

Overall, based on the above demographic information it can be concluded that all five partner countries have seen an increase in influx of refugees and migrants. Finland has seen the least increase due to its northern geographical position in Europe. It can also be concluded that in Cyprus, United Kingdom, and Finland, most refugees and migrants originated in Asian and Middle Eastern countries, while in France most refugees and migrants originated from African/Sub-Saharan countries and in Spain they originated from Latin American countries. In regard to female refugees and female forced-migrants, it was observed generally that female refugees and female forced-migrants are less likely to secure a job in the host country compared to male refugees and migrants as well as compared to non-migrant women. Lastly, it was also observed that most female refugees and female forced-migrants tend to be employed in lower paid and unskilled jobs in comparison to

³ Ibid.

⁴ https://ofpra.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/atoms/files/rapport_dactivite_de_lofpra_-_2020.pdf (page 13) retrieved July 15 2021

⁵ <https://www.histoire-immigration.fr/questions-contemporaines/economie-et-immigration/dans-quels-secteurs-economiques-les-femmes> retrieved July 15 2021

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male refugees and migrants and their most common employment included housekeeping, cleaner, carer, as well as retail and restaurants.

National Context

Research conducted in the United Kingdom has shown that a lot of refugee women face a challenge when it comes to receiving English language lessons in order to integrate themselves into UK society and enable them to find a job. More specifically, Alice Bloch, 2004, mentions that employment is crucial for the successful integration of refugee women within their new societies. However, without the support of English language lessons they may fall victim to under-payment and being over-worked. This can also lead them to have to do unsocial working hours despite the fact they may have families to care for and who need them to be at home at certain times – e.g.: young children. A report generated by the Greater London Authority (2012) highlights the importance of implementing ESOL in places such as schools where children have refugee parents, as female refugees may not have the means to pay for private English classes and may be placed on a waiting list for a long period of time.

Similarly, according to the UNHCR Integration Report for Cyprus, learning the language of the host country is crucial for facilitating integration for refugees and forced migrants into the host country's society.⁶ Most importantly, it is also suggested that learning the host country's language is key in facilitating integration in terms of access to the labour market⁷. In Cyprus, even though recognised refugees can be employed in any sector, they still face serious difficulties in securing a job due to language barriers⁸. Most relevantly, studies conducted in Cyprus suggest that female refugees and female forced-migrants face greater difficulties regarding both integration and employment as a result of increased language barriers⁹. Despite this, in Cyprus no specific integration policy exists and integration issues in regard to language are mainly regulated through skill acquisition by education and vocational training implemented by non-governmental organizations and EU funded projects providing Greek language courses¹⁰.

In Spain, it was concluded that the situation becomes more insecure and socio-economically vulnerable for women refugees and migrants since a large part of them remain immobilised in the lowest part of the social and employment structure in Spain. Following this analysis, the Instituto de la Mujer [Institute of Women] (IM) points out that immigrant women present peculiarities in needs that are different from the ones that immigrant men and the national population present.

⁶ https://www.unhcr.org/cy/wp-content/uploads/sites/41/2018/07/Integration_Report_2018.pdf

⁷ <https://www.glimer.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/WP6-Policy-Brief-Cyprus.pdf>

⁸ <https://support-refugees.eu/media/sofie-national-report-cy-en.pdf>

⁹ <https://medinstgenderstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/WP5-Report-Cyprus-Labour-Market.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://support-refugees.eu/media/sofie-national-report-cy-en.pdf>

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Moreover, a 2016 study by INSEE shows that getting a job for newcomers is largely correlated to their mastery of the French language¹¹. The impact of language, on the other hand, can be seen in the match between the jobs held and the immigrants' level of education and skills. For example, immigrants with a perfect command of the language have salaries that are about 15% higher than those of other immigrants. Based on this, the law of March 7, 2016, on the rights of foreigners, established as the Republican Integration Contract (RIC), has become the foundation of integration policy in France today. It consists of language training, prescribed by agents of the French Office for Immigration and Integration (Ofii) for immigrants who have not attained A1 level, in three courses of 50, 100, or 200 hours, and a civic training course attended by all migrants, which includes two days of training. Also in France, several professional organisations have made the assumption that learning French would be faster and more effective if it was part of the larger objective of learning a job. Refugees who wish to integrate into society need "applied" French - French for professional purposes. Thus, different programs have been created and are available to female refugees and migrants.

Lastly, according to the extensive UTH 2014 study by Statistics Finland regarding employment and wellbeing of foreign nationals in Finland, refugees have a higher rate of unemployment compared to Finns. This might, in part, be explained by the lower level of education of refugees: 40 of those from a refugee background who participated in the study had only completed comprehensive school studies at most, and there were also those with low or no literacy skills. More specifically though, one of the main issues that is brought up in all sources regarding migrants' skills is the importance of learning the Finnish language. A lack of language skills – mostly Finnish, but also English – is seen as the main barrier to labour market integration and employment. Furthermore, Pittaway and Van Genderen Stort (2011) write that female refugees in Finland state that it is difficult to get a job, unless one speaks "proper Finnish" (p. 36). According to these authors, women refugees also argued that Finnish language teaching is generally one-size-fits-all, and they need programs that are more tailored to the needs of different groups and education levels (e.g., elderly, preliterate, traumatized learners, or those not used to a Western modes of teaching). Moreover, Finnish language skills seem to be more essential for women because of the jobs available in the labour market, whereas more men work in technical professions where Finnish is not required, e.g., as engineers, in the construction field, or transport.

Overall, in the national context of the five partner countries, there is a unanimous conclusion made that not knowing the host country's language significantly impacts female refugees and migrants' opportunities for employment and consequently their integration in society. However, out of five partner countries, only France has demonstrated a well-structured integration policy that facilitates the learning of the French language to female refugees and female forced-migrants. In addition, in France several organisations offer language training in addition to French integration laws. On the contrary, in Cyprus no integration policy exists and language lessons are very limited, while in the UK lessons may not be free, or require a long waiting list. Likewise, in Finland, Finnish language lessons are not tailor-made to the needs of refugees. Thus, it can be concluded that there is indeed a need for a tailor-made, specific language course training programme to be applied in the five partner

¹¹ <https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/2122739?sommaire=2122750> retrieved July 16 2021

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countries, which will increase employability chances of female forced-migrants and refugees and consequently their integration in society.

Language Used in Retail Shop Floors and Small Industries

Partners in all five countries conducted both desk-based and field research in order to examine and analyse the language used in retail shop floors and small industries in Cyprus, the United Kingdom, France, Spain, and Finland. The findings of the research are summarised below:

United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, research has shown that in addition to the difficulties raised in securing a job due to the lack of the English language, there is also the issue of an employee being unfamiliar with additional language issues such as workplace jargon, use of formal or informal language, register and meaning, idiomatic expressions slang, abbreviations, profanities, and convivial speech.

More specifically, based on desk-based research, it was shown that in any workplace it is necessary to be able to distinguish between and use both formal and informal language. The language we use with our colleagues, compared to that with a member of management, has huge differences; for example we may greet other colleagues with 'Hi' 'Alright' or 'Howzitgoing?' but in contrast we would use more formal greetings for management such as 'Hello' or 'How are you?'. We may possibly use 'Sir' or 'Madam' or perhaps Mr. or Mrs., followed by the surname. Its formality is entirely dependent on the workplace and the culture therein. When dealing with customers it is always advisable to keep language polite and courteous and to use Sir or Madam when unfamiliar with a customer. It is very common for colleagues who are on friendly terms with one another to call each other 'love' 'Babe' or 'Hun/Honey'. This is not intended romantically but rather as a term of endearment. It is not considered acceptable to use these terms for customers or management. Moreover, most workplaces use special words or phrases specific to their business that may be difficult for other to understand; this is known as workplace jargon.

According to the field research conducted in the United Kingdom, the English language is almost always required in order to be employed in the UK, including English writing, speaking, reading, and listening skills. However, the level of knowledge always depends on the field and line of work. Similarly, field research showed that no language courses are provided for female migrants and that it is important for refugee and migrant employees to

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be given the proper time and training, and the space to ask questions if they do not understand certain phrases. In relation to language used between employees, supervisors, and customers, it was suggested that colleagues might speak to each other informally but between employees and customers formal language is always used. Also, the language used between employees and employers is also usually formal English. Another issue that was identified through the field research was the use of slang in the English language, as well as in the accent.

Cyprus

In Cyprus, the language used in general is very peculiar. The official language of Cyprus is Greek¹² and Cypriots are taught Greek in schools and all official procedures and services use 'proper' Greek. However, Cyprus has a distinct dialect called Cypriot-Greek. According to Arvaniti, as decades go by, in Cyprus there is an increasing shift between the 'standard' Greek language as spoken in Greece and Cypriot-Greek¹³. In a likewise manner, she suggests that "[a]lthough Cypriot is considered a dialect of Greek, Standard Greek and Cypriot are too dissimilar"¹⁴. This is important to mention since female refugees and female forced-migrants, who work at retail shops and small industries, who may have been taught Greek, may still face challenges due to the unique pronunciation and accent of Cypriots who speak Cypriot-Greek in their everyday life. Other publications also suggest that 'Cypriot communication is generally very informal'¹⁵. In regard to retail shops, it is suggested that in general most all Cypriots in Cyprus's cities have at least a basic understanding and knowledge of the English language, and usually employers in shops or restaurants will employ someone who knows English¹⁶.

In a likewise manner, based on the field research, it was established that in Cypriot retail shops and small industries no formal language is used, even between employers and employees. This is because Greek is not always a requirement when employing someone, as long as they know English; the language used in this line of work is mostly a mix of Greek and English.

Spain

¹² https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/countries/member-countries/cyprus_en

¹³ https://escholarship.org/content/qt3qx6t51c/qt3qx6t51c_noSplash_ddd4cc95cc95e3c5767d8dbce9fc56a6.pdf

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/cypriot-culture/cypriot-culture-communication>

¹⁶ https://www.kiprinform.com/en/cyprus_interesting/the-cypriot-language/

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Desk-based research shows that there is a great deal of Spanish language courses aimed at migrants, in many cases offered on a free basis by different government bodies and third-party entities. It's common for municipalities in Spain to provide some basic knowledge of Spanish language to migrants, as part of the integration process, especially in bigger cities, where migrants tend to concentrate and where they usually settle first. The effectiveness of these courses for the purposes of employment is, however, limited, as they are usually restricted to the lower levels of Spanish language learning. Therefore, while they provide a useful first step, and enable the students to go through their basic needs, they usually fall short of providing the necessary level of knowledge for accessing employment. Migrants usually make up for this lack of education with their own resources, resorting to private lessons if they can afford it, or through everyday interactions with native speakers.

When it comes to employment in retail shop floors and small industries, the informal register is the most commonly used. This poses a double challenge for migrants. On the one hand, the informal speech can be very different from the formal language the courses usually focus on. On the other hand, the wide variety of Spanish accents and dialects means that the progress achieved by migrants may be endangered by even small changes in location or job. It was suggested through the field research that in small industries only basic knowledge of Spanish is required in order to be employed, but on the contrary, in retail shops someone needs to be fluent in Spanish in order to be employed. This is because of day-to-day interactions with clients in retail shops. Despite this, in retail shops it was pointed out that usually informal language is used. This is done even between employees and customers, in order to establish familiarity, with the exception of talking to older people, where formal language is used.

France

In France, based on the desk-research conducted, even the least skilled occupations, such as those held by migrant women in retail shops and industries, require the use of specific language skills. First of all, oral language skills in interaction, since employees must be able to understand instructions, introduce themselves to customers, exchange information, report on their activities, or verbalise their work activity, within the framework of the process of validation of acquired experience, in order to gain access to certain professional qualifications, for example. Secondly, correct communication is essential, since employees must be able to understand instructions concerning the organisation of their work site, but also safety instructions, short information messages (on lighted signs, for example), notes sent by the previous team, reports from superiors, specifications, or even messages left by clients.

Moreover, based on the field research, it was suggested that in France the use of informal language depends on the level of education of the migrant women. Also, it was pointed out "The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein"

that in France there needs to be special training for informal language which female refugees and female forced-migrants will use at work, since courses may be too general and may not provide specific language skills adapted to different kind of jobs. Furthermore, based on the field research, an obstacle for non-native French speakers is accent and pronunciation. Generally, in France people don't speak many languages and thus they aren't used to different accents. So migrants with strong foreign accents are usually misunderstood or not understood at all. So French phonetic classes are very useful for migrants. In terms of grammar, the use of the French conditional tense is very important to learn, because it brings politeness to requests. To work in commerce, it is essential that migrant women learn the conditional form to speak with customers and with their boss. Lastly, in relation to small industries and retail shops, no formal language is used or required.

Finland

In Finland, no formal reports indicated the use of the Finnish language in retail shops and small industries, however based on the field research informal language is usually used in those occupations. For example, informal language means that no formal greetings, no formal "te" pronoun (formal "you") are used with the customers; "Hei" as an informal greeting instead of formal "Päivää". Sometimes formal language will be used but this relates mostly to interactions between employees and customers. Moreover, it was suggested that spoken skills are very important when working in retail and with customers, as it is important to connect with customers in a friendly and informal way. Lastly, field research showed that it is very important to offer enough courses for refugees to develop their Finnish language skills and believed mastering especially spoken Finnish was essential for finding employment in service and retail professions.

Conclusions

Based on the above, several conclusions can be made on the language used in retail shops and small industries in the five partner countries. Firstly, in Cyprus, Spain, France, and Finland, informal language is predominantly used in these fields of work. Informal language can be used between employees and colleagues, employees and customers and even employees and employers. On the contrary, in the United Kingdom, even though informal

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language is acceptable in some circumstances, formal language is mostly used between employees and management and employees and customers. Secondly, in regards to language requirements in order to get a job in a partner country, in the United Kingdom English is the predominant language used and some knowledge or proficiency in English is always required. On the contrary, in Cyprus Greek is not always required to get a job. In Spain, France, and Finland the knowledge of the national language will help you get a job where employees have communication and interaction with customers (e.g., in retail shops) while knowledge of the national language may not be required to work in small industries. Lastly, it was pointed out in the United Kingdom and France female refugees and migrants may face difficulties in regards to accents or slang used and in a likewise manner in Cyprus they may face difficulties with the dialect used.

Language Needs of Female Refugees and Migrants working in Retail Shops and Small Industries

Partners in all five countries conducted desk-based research in order to examine and analyse the language needs of female refugees and migrants working in retail shop floors and small industries in Cyprus, the United Kingdom, France, Spain, and Finland. The findings of the research are summarised below.

United Kingdom

According to the research conducted in the United Kingdom, a very important language need relates to the use of pronunciation, which is hugely important in the work environment. There are instances of confusion caused by mispronunciation of words. Similarly, accents and different dialects from around the U.K can pose a problem for those not used to hearing them. Wherever the workplace is based, it is common for people from all areas to live and work. For example, a workplace could be located in somewhere like Reading, but it may have employees from Wales, Scotland, Liverpool, Newcastle and Northern Ireland. It could also have employees from different countries who are also learning English. The accent that comes from Liverpool (sometimes referred to as 'scouse') is usually fast, harsh, and nasal. They also have different meanings for several words. In addition, in many of the retail and manufacturing industries, people do not usually converse in the Queen's English which the non-native employee may have previously been exposed to – instead they use slang terms and connected speech which can be very fast and difficult to comprehend upon initial and early exposure to the language. Lastly, in these

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types of industries, idiomatic expressions are regularly used too. Most natives use them inside and outside of work in everyday life. Without prior exposure to this language, it can prove challenging when trying to understand the meaning. Idioms are figurative speech and not meant to be taken literally. Like idioms, phrasal verbs can also be difficult to interpret, since they may not make sense to a non-native speaker because the words in isolation don't mean anything close to the meaning of the phrasal verb.

Cyprus

In Cyprus, in regards to language needs, research showed that there is a significant need for targeted integration policy. More specifically, it was suggested that in Cyprus very limited opportunities are available for migrants and refugees and especially for female refugees and female forced-migrants. According to the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, any policies for integration in terms of language in general overlook women's needs due to their 'double role' as mothers and caretakers of the family home¹⁷. Similarly, in regard to female refugees and female forced-migrants, integration strategies have been criticized as been 'gender-blind'¹⁸ since they do not take into consideration the needs of female refugees and female forced-migrants. Greek language courses and seminars often ignore refugee and migrant women's role as family and children's caretakers in the family, with most courses

and seminars taking place in the afternoon, something that does not coincide with their childcare duties¹⁹.

Spain

In Spain several language needs and difficulties were identified during the research. Firstly, it was suggested that there is a difficulty to understand irony and phrases with double meanings. Since these are used on a daily basis, it is hard for female refugees and migrants to keep up with a conversation. Also, it was pointed out that there is a general

¹⁷ <https://medinstgenderstudies.org/gender-dynamics-across-reception-and-integration-in-cyprus/>

¹⁸ <https://medinstgenderstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/WP5-Report-Cyprus-Labour-Market.pdf>

¹⁹ *ibid*

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misunderstanding of the gender of words, difficulty with the masculine and feminine gender of words and articles. Another issue in regards to the Spanish language identified was that people speak very fast and do not vocalize words well, which often makes it difficult to have a conversation and understand the other person if you are not fluent in Spanish. Lastly, several pronunciation issues were identified like whether words are spelled with "c" or with "s" and problems pronouncing words with "rr".

France

Based on the research conducted in France, it was suggested that 11% of people (mostly immigrants) in France have difficulties with oral and written language, this percentage increases in Ile-de-France region, one of the first relevant French regions in terms of the number of migrants. The issue of language learning has therefore become a central concern for the actors involved in the integration policy of refugees in France. Secondly, there is a problem of method: the courses currently offered only aim at a basic level and are not adapted to the heterogeneous profiles of newcomers. It is striking that only one out of two refugees with more than ten years of residence in the European Union (EU) has acquired an advanced knowledge of the host country's language, while the proportion is 69% among non-EU migrants with a long residence time. This raises the question of whether there is a need to develop language training for refugees as a specific group of learners.

Finland

In Finland, research shows that Finnish language skills are essential for employment and one of the most significant factors in the employment of female refugees and migrants in general. In the UTH 2014 study, 27% of those who moved to Finland as refugees estimated their Finnish language skills as beginner level, 47% as intermediate and 21% as advanced. Furthermore, those of refugee background were more likely to have participated in a Finnish language course (88%) than migrants who moved to Finland for other reasons. This is most likely due to the language courses targeted towards refugees. It is noteworthy that the development of languages skills from beginner level to intermediate level improves employment only for those who have completed comprehensive education at most. At secondary level and higher education, having intermediate Finnish skills does not seem to

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help very much with finding employment. In integration courses, the language education usually only continues up to intermediate-level Finnish. Based on the UTH results, the ideal level of education should be determined based on the person's educational background. Furthermore, in a study examining the role of the English language on the integration of refugees into Finnish society, English language was considered to be the most commonly spoken foreign language in Finland and it has gained a central position in some settings in educational and professional life (Leppänen, S. and Nikula, T. (2007).

Conclusions

Based on the above assessment, several conclusions can be made in regards to the language needs of refugee women and migrant women in the five partner countries. Firstly, it is concluded that in the United Kingdom and in Spain there is a similar issue regarding pronunciation of words, regional accents, use of idioms, speaking too fast, and use of specific phrases. This issue results in female refugees and female forced migrants who may know the basics of a language to struggle even more because it is impossible for them to learn all the accents and pronunciations. In a likewise manner, in the remaining three partner countries - Cyprus, France, and Finland – another issue was raised. The issue of language needs concerns the lack of a targeted integration policy and more specifically the lack of specific language courses tailor-made for female refugees and migrants.

Conclusion

Based on the above, this report will conclude the following:

Key Results

To begin with, based on the above, there is unanimous agreement that knowing the language of the host country will not only increase the chances of employability of refugee women and migrants, but also will increase the integration of refugee women and migrants who are already working in retail shops and small industries.

Moreover, another key conclusion that should be mentioned is that in order to facilitate good knowledge of the national language, it is not enough to take a general language course. It is important for refugee women and migrants to learn any accents, idioms, forms of expression, and any different pronunciations which will further help them in their communication at work and thus increase their chance of integration into society. For example, in the United Kingdom it was suggested that perhaps one of the most important factors in being able to integrate is the ability to understand British humour. A lack of understanding can lead to people feeling excluded or

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offended. Similarly, in France it was suggested that migrant women need to learn correct French phonetics because that may affect understanding, especially in communication with French customers only speaking their mother tongue, who may be less used to understanding non-French accents.

Moreover, based on this report it can be concluded that specialised language courses should be designed to benefit female refugees and female migrants. For example, in Cyprus it is not enough to learn Greek given the peculiar situation with the Greek-Cypriot dialect. Similarly, in Finland it was concluded that it is important to provide language courses at different levels; for example, someone who will work in a small industry may not need the same communication and oral skills as someone working in retail. Lastly, in Spain and Cyprus it was also concluded that it is important to design specialised language courses for female migrants and female refugees which take into account their role as women caretakers along with any cultural differences.

Recommendations

Based on the above, this report recommends that:

1. Language training that female migrants might need differs from industry to industry. Therefore, a focused training by the employer on the actual job position that the female migrant should be working on would be more efficient.
2. Language lessons/training should be flexible to accommodate the busy schedule of migrant and refugee women who are mothers or who are working.
3. Language courses should be designed to accompany the needs of women from other cultures (for example an all-female class).
4. Combining language learning with digital training is important, to add essential skills, enabling them to perform simple tasks such as sending emails and filling in online forms.
5. More courses on advanced levels are needed; most of the courses offered for refugees only cover basic and intermediate language skills.
6. More emphasis on spoken and everyday use of language would be useful, instead of formal written language skills, as spoken language is needed especially in retail and customer-service oriented professions.
7. It is important to include in the curriculum teaching of slang, idioms, accents, pronunciations, and dialects.

Taxonomy of Terminology

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United Kingdom

The English language is full of words which have different meanings. One word can have several different meanings or uses. The word **'get'** or its past form **'got'** is one such word. Some different examples include:

- **I've got a car** = This means you have a car - you own it.
- **I got my car fixed the other day** = This means your car was broken and somebody else fixed it for you.
- **I've got to go** = This means you have to be somewhere else.
- **I got a loaf of bread from the shop** = This means you bought a loaf of bread from the shop.
- **I've got to get this work finished** = This means you have to finish some work you are doing.
- **I've got you** = This means I will support you.

Usually with words like 'get' or got it's easy to identify the meaning from the context and it's something that gets easier with further exposure.

Another difficult area of the English language is contractions. In modern English and in informal English, contractions are very common. One of the most common and widespread slang words is the contracted word **'ain't'** which is sometimes used in informal speaking in place of 'isn't': 'It ain't time to go home yet' or has/have not 'You ain't got long left till you finish your shift'. Ain't is also sometimes pronounced 'ent' 'It ent time to go home yet'. This type of slang is mostly used by younger people as opposed to older people and always only ever in informal speech. It can be difficult to hear contractions, even for a native speaker.

Increasingly in the UK, the contracted form of 'could have' which is **'could've'** is often mistaken for 'could of' particularly amongst the younger generation. 'Could of' is often used instead of 'could've' and it's the same for **'would've'** or 'would have'. The contraction of 'they are' is they're; when spoken it is impossible to differentiate this with the words 'there' and 'their'. Again, when trying to understand the meaning, it is always necessary to think about the context that the words are spoken in.

Another increasingly common contracted slang word that has entered the English language is **'innit'** You can often hear this at the end of a sentence or statement when someone is asking for your agreement, e.g., 'It's been a long day today innit'.

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Through the interviews of the field research conducted, several problematic words and phrases for female refugees and forced migrants in small scale industries and retail shop floors in the UK were identified. From the list below, the vocabulary may seem fairly challenging to female migrants if they have a language barrier already.

Words such as: *Gondola, omni-channel retailing, and visual merchandising* could be seen as especially challenging as they are not used every day in the English language. Learning this vocabulary could be useful if a person is looking to work in the retail industry.

- **Click and Collect:** This is when customers can buy an item online and collect it in store.
- **EPOS “Electronic Point of Sale”:** This is the electronic system used to record store sales and organise inventory.
- **Gondola:** The Gondola is the free-standing block of shelves seen in stores which display their goods.
- **Inventory:** Inventory refers to the stock the store has whether on the shop floor or in the back warehouse/room.
- **Merchandise Presentation:** This refers to what a store does to ensure the goods of the store are presented in a way that will attract more customers. This can include different colours, pricing tickets, arranging displays, and the position of the goods the store is selling.
- **Merchandising:** Merchandising is used to describe any act that enhances the chance of selling products. It is the concept of promoting, to sell the products once a customer is inside a shop.
- **Omni-Channel Retailing:** Having an online presence on different websites and channels.
- **Point-of-Purchase Display:** A promotional display at the front of the shop or near the tills that offer “last chance” products or products that are on sale.
- **Back of house:** Area in the shop that customers have no access to. This can be where extra stock is kept.
- **Front of house/shop floor:** The part of the shop customers have access to.
- **Visual merchandising:** Anything the business does to display goods to increase sales.

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Cyprus

- **Posa ine? (Πόσα είναι?)** Meaning: How much is it? (pronounced ‘posa kamni’ in Cypriot Greek)²⁰
- **[kaltses] ‘socks’** (pronounced klatses in Cypriot Greek)²¹
- The use of the masculine forms of titles even when a woman holds the position (e.g. [diefthintis] ‘the director general’ instead of Standard Greek [i diefthintria])²²
- **«έχετε» – “you have”**, will be pronounced as “eshete” and not as “ehete.”²³
- **Katalava (I understood)** pronounced as **‘Ekatalava’**: Cypriot maintains the Ancient Greek ‘augment’ -e in all past tense forms²⁴
- **Here (edo)** pronounced (dame)²⁵

Note: Recently, a dictionary was created which translates Greek words and phrases into Cypriot-Greek : <https://wikipriaka.com/>

Also, a common problematic word/phrase is the monetary amounts that need to be paid by the customers. Interviewees did not know the numbers/amounts in Greek. Likewise, another problematic phrase identified was:

- ***‘How much does this cost?’***

Other problematic phrases were everyday greetings and small talk between them and customers and between them and colleagues. Even though all interviewees understand basic greetings like ‘Hello’, ‘Good Morning’, etc., it is harder for them to understand small talk like:

- ***“What did you do this weekend”***
- ***“The weather is nice today”***
- ***“It is very hot today”***

Moreover, another set of problematic phrases/words identified include basic instructions and commands like:

²⁰ <https://theculturetrip.com/europe/cyprus/articles/21-essential-phrases-youll-need-in-cyprus/>

²¹ https://escholarship.org/content/qt3qx6t51c/qt3qx6t51c_noSplash_ddd4cc95cc95e3c5767d8dbce9fc56a6.pdf

²² Ibid

²³ https://www.kiprinform.com/en/cyprus_interesting/the-cypriot-language/

²⁴ file:///C:/Users/chris/CSI%20Dropbox/Christina%20Michael/My%20PC%20(DESKTOP-6SSJD1N)/Downloads/Cyprus_-_Encyclopedia_of_Linguistics.pdf

²⁵ Ibid

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- “Can you fetch me the...”
- “Can you clean the...”

Lastly, all interviewees stated that they faced problems with identifying items/words. For example, the interviewee who works in the food production factory stated that her employer would say the name of the vegetables or products in Greek and just show her using gestures.

France

The problematic points in using French in these kinds of jobs are usually those that are also found in other contexts:

- One of the main difficulties of the French language is the choice of the correct gender. In retail shops, one of the difficulties could be to know if *skirt* or *coat* are masculine or feminine.
- Other problems that may affect understanding are linked to pronunciation. For instance, the correct pronunciation of different nasal sounds, or of the French R may be challenging²⁶.
- Verbs’ conjugation and the correct use of the subjunctive may be hard for learners²⁷. Imagine you want to say, “**I need to drink water**” (“**il faut que je boive de l’eau**”). Because “need” is a verb of necessity, you must conjugate “drink” in the subjunctive (N/A in English, but it will serve as an example). In French, the difference between the indicative verb “**bois**” vs the subjunctive verb “**boive**” is subtle, but important.
- Liaisons can also be difficult to learn. For instance, in the sentence “**cette juppe coute deux euros**” (**this skirt is two euros**), there is a liaison between the X in the word *deux* and the E of the word *euros*.
- An additional phonetic obstacle with French is the presence of **silent letters**. Beginners often would pronounce the “**-ent**” ending of the 3rd person plural of verbs, but this is not correct. For instance, in the verb “**travailler**” (**to work**) the 3rd person plural is “**travaillent**”, but the “**ent**” is not pronounced.

Spain

²⁶ <https://www.private-frenchlessons-paris.com/blog/frenchlanguage/2873-5-difficulties-french-language>

²⁷ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/42795984_'French_is_the_Language_of_Love_and_Stuff'_Student_perceptions_of_issues_related_to_motivation_in_learning_a_foreign_language

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While it is reportedly relatively easy to acquire at least a basic competence in Spanish, mastering the higher levels of it requires considerably more effort. Among the most notable obstacles for it we can find:

- Confusion with the gender of the substantives. Gender in Spanish indicates more than just masculine or feminine, as changing the gender of a word may mean a change in meaning as well (i.e., puerto (port) vs puerta (door)).
- As in other romance languages, verbs have not only to be conjugated in the right tense, but also mode. The speaker has to learn when to use the indicative mode (“factual”, “descriptive”) and the subjunctive (used to talk about wishes and possibilities). This is an important distinction, as both are extensively used in everyday speech.
- Contrary to many other languages, Spanish employs two verbs for the action of being (“ser” and “estar”), differentiated by the duration of the action. The differences between them may be very nuanced and result in numerous plays-on-words that may be especially challenging for non-native speakers.
- Finally, Spanish has a substantial amount of dialects with notable differences in pronunciation and vocabulary. While most Spanish-speakers are able to fluently communicate in a standard variety, a more complete integration of the speaker may require mastering the local dialect.

Finland

The main challenges according to the interviewees in terms of the Finnish language were the fact that spoken Finnish and slang (some special slang words are used in the capital area of Helsinki) were very different from written, formal Finnish, whereas courses teach more written, formal Finnish; there is not enough focus on spoken Finnish and informal language use. This is problematic, as all interviewees state that it is important when working with customers in any retail or service profession to master informal, spoken Finnish, in order to interact with customers in the appropriate manner.

Other aspects of Finnish that were seen as difficult were the pronunciation, due to words with different meanings that sound similar owing to double vowels or double consonants (**e.g. in words such as “tuli” = fire and “tuuli” = wind; “kuka” = who and “kukka” = flower**).

Long words were also found to be difficult, as Finnish has many long words, or combined words.

As one of the interviewees states:

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"Finnish grammar is quite difficult and it has altogether 16 cases. There is also a special pronunciation of words that to me sounds all the same."

There were also challenges with pronunciation of the letters "ä", "ö" and "y".

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